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Dr Adrian D. Lewis, 36 Lilymead Avenue, Knowle, Bristol BS4 2BX, England

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Range retraction of the White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus* from the eastern coast of Africa

The White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus* is virtually restricted to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Although present in most parts of this range throughout the year, there are pronounced movements in the spring and autumn.

The shift is northwards during the northern summer, when birds reach the Gulf of Aqaba and are numerous in the Gulf of Suez (Cramp & Simmons 1983, Hollom *et al.* 1988). Breeding data are apparently few. Alexander (1963) mentions July–September "egg-dates", but Harrison (1983) considers these imperfectly known, noting that breeding is perhaps during June–September. Nikolaus (1987) records egg-laying on the Sudan coast in August. From October/November to March/April, there is a return to the south and east, when the species becomes scarce in the northern reaches of its range but abundant in the Gulf of Aden (Cramp & Simmons 1983, Urban *et al.* 1986, Nikolaus 1987).

Vagrants to the south and east of the normal range appear to be associated with these movements. A single immature reached Lake Turkana in northern Kenya during early April (Hopson & Hopson 1975), and stragglers to the island of Masirah, off the southeastern coast of Oman, were in April and October (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Reports from far south along the eastern seaboard of Africa have come from southern Mozambique (20°S) during January 1947 and March 1972, and from South Africa (34°S) in January 1962. These southern African occurrences are quoted by Cramp & Simmons (1983), but doubted by Harrison (1983) and considered erroneous by Urban *et al.* (1986).

Hitherto unpublished records show that this gull formerly extended south to coastal Kenya (4°S) with some regularity. The birds were seen from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s during the February–early May period (though possibly not annually), at Horne's Reef (4 km north of Kilifi) and at Kanamai (20 km north of Mombasa). Precise dates for the occurrences at these two localities were not kept since the regularity of the birds made them commonplace; but there were single records a little further south at Nyali (Mombasa) and Diani Beach (4°18S), on 2 February 1956 and 14 April 1958, respectively.

The birds were mainly adults, often observed at distances down to 20–30 m, and they were invariably perched amongst flocks of the much commoner Sooty Gull *L. hemprichii*. Their most obvious field characters were the deep red bill (dusky towards the tip), the white patch above and below the eye and, less obvious, their slightly slimmer build when compared with the Sooty Gulls. Three to six White-eyed Gulls in a flock of 20 or 30 Sooty Gulls was not unusual. The tendency for these two species to associate with each other is well known (Urban *et al.* 1986, Hollom *et al.* 1988).

The seasonality of these records agrees with that of the species' southwards shift mentioned above. The regular occurrence of this gull south to Kenya lends more credence to the reports from Mozambique and South Africa, which were also during this season of the year.

What is quite clear, however, is that the White-eyed Gull has disappeared from these eastern coasts of Africa in recent years. The most recent of the far southern vagrants was in 1972, a few years after the Kenyan records quoted here. At the present day, Ash & Miskell (1983) mention the species south only to 10°N on the coast of Somalia, some 1000 km north of the Kilifi–Mombasa area. Furthermore, there have been no records from competent observers based in the Mogadishu (coastal Somalia at 2°N) and Kilifi–Mombasa areas in recent years, and particularly interested in gulls and terns. Interestingly, while the White-eyed Gull has been retracting its range from eastern Africa, several Palaearctic larids, most notably the Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* and the Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, have been extending southwards into this region (Lewis & Pomeroy 1989).

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D.K. Bednall, 70 Herringston Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 2BT and J.G. Williams, 14 Tyne Road, Oakham, Rutland, Leicestershire LE15 6SJ, England.

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Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*: first record for East Africa

During a visit to Latham Island, Tanzania (6°54S, 39°56E) on 22 November 1987, we noticed several small terns flying offshore. The most striking features were their whiteness, small size and rapid wing beats, the last producing a wader-like, direct flight. They looked as small as Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* which are common on the mainland coast, but they were heavier with broader, less slender wings. Black on the wing-tips was restricted to the leading edge of the outer primary. Nine birds landed on the beach for